

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-02

INFO OCT-01 IO-02 ISO-00 /005 R

66613

DRAFTED BY: EUR:DGOOTT

APPROVED BY: EUR:DGOOTT

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R 162209Z JAN 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 009850

FOLLOWING REPEAT LONDON 00656 ACTION SECSTATE INFO BUDAPEST
MOSCOW PRAGUE BONN BRUSSELS COPENHAGEN DUBLIN THE HAGUE
LUXEMBOURG PARIS ROME EC BRUSSELS NATO OECD PARIS JANUARY 15TH

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 00656

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: SOV, ELAB, ICFTU, PFOR, XG, XH

SUBJECT: SOVIET OFFICIALS DISCUSS EUROPEAN TRADE
UNION CONFERENCE

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE FRG LABOR ATTACHE, DR. RUDOLF
VOLLMER, HAS DESCRIBED TO US A MEETING AT THE FRG
EMBASSY WITH TWO SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS CONCERNING
THE FORTHCOMING EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFERENCE IN
GENEVA (JAN. 19) AND RELATED MATTERS. END SUMMARY

2. IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE EMBASSY LABOR ATTACHE
ON JANUARY 14, VOLLMER SAID THAT HE RAISED SEVERAL KEY
QUESTIONS WITH THE TWO SOVIET OFFICIALS, RALF MIKENBERG,
A SECOND SECRETARY WHO FOLLOWS LABOR MATTERS, AND
VLADIMIR VERIGRADOV (SIC), (THE LATTER IS NOT LISTED IN
THE DEC. 1973 DIPLOMATIC LIST). HE ASKED THE RUSSIANS
A) WHAT THEY PLANNED TO TALK ABOUT IN GENEVA; B) WHETHER
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THE SOVIET NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTER (AUCCTU) AND

ITS EASTERN BLOC SUPPORTERS ARE SEEKING AGREEMENT AT GENEVA FOR A FURTHER EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFERENCE WHICH WOULD DEAL WITH "POLITICAL" ISSUES AND WHICH WOULD BE HELD AT THE END OF THE YEAR, PARALLEL TO A POSSIBLE CSCE SUMMIT CONFERENCE, IF ONE WERE TO TAKE PLACE AT THAT TIME, AND C) WHETHER THE AUCCTU WILL SEEK MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC).

3. IN THEIR RESPONSE, THE SOVIET OFFICIALS (MIKENBERG WAS THE MAJOR SPOKESMAN) SAID THAT THE MAIN AGENDA TOPIC ON JANUARY 19TH CONCERNS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CLOSER COOPERATION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST TRADE UNIONS. THEY TOLD VOLLMER THAT THEY WOULD NOT OBJECT TO A COORDINATING COMMITTEE AND WOULD ACCEPT ALLEN HARGREAVES, HEAD OF THE TUC INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT, AS ITS CHAIRMAN. THEY INDICATED THAT THEY NOT ONLY SOUGHT ANOTHER TRADE UNION CONFERENCE AT THE END OF THE YEAR, SUCH AS VOLLMER DESCRIBED, BUT THEY ALSO FAVORED AGREEMENT AT GENEVA TO A PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR SUCH A CONFERENCE UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF BORIS AVERYANOV, HEAD OF THE AUCCTU INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT. ALTHOUGH THE SOVIETS, THEY SAID, HAD NOT YET MADE UP THEIR MINDS ABOUT THE FULL COMPOSITION OF SUCH A COMMITTEE, THEY WOULD WISH THAT EASTERN BLOC TRADE UNIONS REPRESENTED ON THE COMMITTEE BE FROM THE SOVIET UNION, EAST GERMANY AND HUNGARY. THE AUCCTU, THEY NOTED, HAD NO OBJECTION TO INCLUDING ON THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING SUCH "NON-POLITICAL" ITEMS AS SAFETY AND SOCIAL SECURITY.

4. THE SOVIET OFFICIALS TOLD VOLLMER THAT THEY VIEWED THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE AS AN INSTRUMENT TO FOSTER INCREASING COOPERATION OF TRADE UNIONS - BUT OUTSIDE THE ILO FRAMEWORK. ONE OF ITS MAJOR PRACTICAL TASKS, IN THEIR OPINION, WOULD BE TO COORDINATE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ACTION TO DEAL WITH MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS.

5. THE RUSSIANS ALSO INDICATED THAT THE AUCCTU WOULD
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ULTIMATELY SEEK AFFILIATION WITH THE ETUC. THE FIRST STEP, THEY SAID, WAS FOR THE WFTU TO OBTAIN OBSERVER STATUS AT ETUC MEETINGS, SIMILAR TO THAT NOW HELD BY THE ICFTU, AND WHICH IS ALSO BEING SOUGHT BY THE WCL. (VOLLMER SAID THE SOVIET OFFICIALS ALSO CLAIMED THAT MERGER BETWEEN THE WFTU AND THE WCL WAS "VERY MUCH IN THE MAKING.")

6. THE SOVIET OFFICIALS ALSO ASKED THE FRG LABOR ATTACHE IF HEINZ VETTER, DGB LEADER, WOULD BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE ETUC TO SUCCEED THE NOW LORD VICTOR FEATHER.

VOLLMER REPLIED THAT HE DIDN'T KNOW BUT THAT SINCE ETUC WAS A DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION, IT WAS OPEN TO ALL CANDIDATES.

7. COMMENT: IF VOLLMER'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH THE TWO SOVIET OFFICIALS ACCURATELY REFLECTS THE VIEWPOINT OF THE SOVIET AUCCTU (AND THEREFORE THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT), IT WOULD INDICATE HOW TENACIOUSLY THE SOVIETS HAVE HELD ON TO THEIR LONG-STANDING IDEA OF LINKING A EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFERENCE WITH THE CSCE. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY APPEAR TO BE MOVING RELENTLESSLY TOWARD THE RECONSTRUCTION OF A UNITARY INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN THE IMAGE OF THE PRE-1949 WFTU - ALTHOUGH THIS TIME WITHOUT THE AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS.

8. THE RUSSIANS CAN EXPECT TO RECEIVE CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT FOR MANY OF THEIR IDEAS FROM THE BRITISH TUC. JUDGING FROM A RECENT CONVERSATION WE HAVE HAD WITH CYRIL PLANT, A MEMBER OF THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL, THE TUC IS LIKELY TO SUPPORT A COORDINATING COMMITTEE WITH ALLEN HARGREAVES AS CHAIRMAN, AND A SECOND CONFERENCE "POSSIBLY AT THE END OF THE YEAR," ALTHOUGH HE WAS NOT CLEAR AS TO THE LIKELY SUBJECT MATTER. PLANT CONSIDERS THAT BRITISH ACCEPTANCE OF COMMUNIST UNIONS FROM EASTERN OR WESTERN EUROPE WITHIN THE ETUC IS A "LOGICAL STEP" IN VIEW OF THE TUC BLACKPOOL CONGRESS RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE GENERAL COUNCIL "TO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO THE SETTING UP OF AN INTERNATIONAL LIAISON COMMITTEE

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AND (URGING IT) TO MAKE EVERY ENDEAVOR TO INITIATE DISCUSSIONS WITH A VIEW TO SECURING INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNITY." MOREOVER -- UNLESS THE CURRENT INDUSTRIAL CRISIS FORCES A CHANGE IN PLANS -- JACK JONES, WHO PRESSED FOR THIS RESOLUTION AT BLACKPOOL, WILL BE PARTICIPATING, TOGETHER WITH LEN MURRAY, TUC GENERAL SECRETARY, AND HARGREAVES, IN THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFERENCE. ALF ALLEN, WHO WAS ORIGINALLY EXPECTED TO ATTEND THE GENEVA MEETING, WILL NOT BE PRESENT. TWO OTHER TUC GENERAL COUNCIL MEMBERS, PLANT AND PARRY, ARE NOW IN GENEVA FOR THE SECOND REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE ILO, BUT MAY BE LIMITED TO A "WALK-IN" ROLE AT THE JAN. 19TH MEETING, ACCORDING TO A TUC SOURCE.

9. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT COULD BE THAT THE SOVIET

AND BRITISH VIEWS MAY BE STRONGLY OPPOSED BY THE GERMAN
DGB. VOLLMER ALSO TOLD US THAT, IN PREPARATION FOR
HIS MEETING WITH THE SOVIET OFFICIALS, HE CALLED THE
DGB HEADQUARTERS IN DUSSELDORF. HE WAS THEN INFORMED
BY THE HEAD OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT, KRISTOFF-
ERSON (SIC), THAT THE DGB EXECUTIVE HAD ALREADY DECIDED
TO OPPOSE A) ESTABLISHMENT OF A COORDINATING COMMITTEE;
B) ANY "POLITICAL" EAST-WEST CONFERENCE - ALTHOUGH IT
IS PREPARED TO HAVE TALKS ON SUCH ISSUES AS SAFETY AND
SOCIAL SECURITY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ILO - ; OR
C) AFFILIATION WITH THE ETUC BY COMMUNIST UNIONS.

SOHM UNQUOTE RUSH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, MEETINGS, LABOR POLICY LINE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE009850
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EUR:DGOOTT
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740137/aaaabitk.tel
Line Count: 182
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 APR 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <28 MAY 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET OFFICIALS DISCUSS EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFERENCE
TAGS: ELAB, PFOR, UR, XG, XH, AUCCTU, ETUC
To: GENEVA
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005